

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

APPELLANT: Wolfgang Thiel

CONFIRMATION NO. 1989

SERIAL NO. 09/527,138

GROUP ART UNIT: 3629

FILED: March 16, 2000

EXAMINER: R. S. Woo

TITLE: "METHOD AND ARRANGEMENT FOR ENTERING
CONTENTS OF A FRANKING IMPRINT INTO A POSTAGE
METER MACHINE"

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450

APPELLANT'S APPEAL BRIEF

S I R:

In accordance with the provisions of 37 C.F.R. §1.192(a), Appellant herewith submits his Appeal Brief in support of the appeal of the above-referenced application.

REAL PARTY IN INTEREST:

The real party in interest is Francotyp-Postalia AG & Co. KG, a German corporation, assignee of the present application.

RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES:

There are no related appeals and no related interferences.

STATUS OF CLAIMS:

The application was filed with original claims 1-9. Claim 8 was cancelled during prosecution, and accordingly claims 1-7 and 9 are the subject of the present appeal.

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STATUS OF AMENDMENTS:

This Appeal Brief is accompanied by an Amendment making an editorial change in claim 1, to correct a minor informality therein to conform claim 1 to the requirements of §112, second paragraph. This informality was noted by the Appellant after the Notice of Appeal was filed. Since this Amendment is being filed simultaneously with the present Appeal Brief, the status of this Amendment is not known at this time. Nevertheless, since the Amendment merely corrects a minor informality, Appellant assumes there should be no reason for not entering that Amendment, and therefore the copy of claim 1 in the claims appended hereto incorporates the change which has been made in this Amendment.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION:

The present invention is directed to a method and an arrangement for entering the contents of a franking imprint into a postage meter machine, the postage meter machine being of the type having an electronic printer for printing the franking imprint, which requires print data to be compiled representing the franking imprint. The invention is directed to a simplified method and arrangement for providing appropriate data to configure the franking imprint for different carriers and for different countries.

Figure 1 shows a perspective view of the inventive postage meter machine from the back. (p.6, l.21-22) The postage meter machine is composed of a meter 1 and a base 2. (p.6, l.22) The latter is equipped with a chip card reader unit 70 (see Figure 2) that is arranged behind the guide plate 20 and is accessible from the upper edge 22 of the housing. (p.6, l.22 p.7, l.1) After the postage meter machine is switched on with the switch 71, a chip card 49 is inserted into the insertion slot 72

from top to bottom. (More than one chip card may be used; the chip card 49 represents all such chip cards.) (p.7, I.1-4) A letter 3 supplied standing on edge and that has a surface to be printed lying against the guide plate 20 is then printed with a franking imprint in conformity with the input data, whereby this franking imprint includes a value imprint 31. The letter delivery opening is laterally limited by a transparent plate 21 and by the guide plate 20. (p.7, I.4-8)

Figure 2 shows a block circuit diagram of a postage meter machine that is equipped with a chip card reader unit 70 for reloading change data by chip card and with a printer with a printhead 4 that is controlled by a control unit 23. The control unit 23 has a motherboard 9 equipped with a microprocessor 91 with appertaining memories 92, 93, 94, 95. (p.7, I.8-12)

The program memory 92 contains an operating program at least for printing and contains at least security-relevant component parts of the program for a pre-determined format change of a part of the operating data. (p.7, I.12-14)

A first chip card 49 inserted into an insertion slot 72 of the chip card reader unit 70 allows a reloading of a data set into the postage meter machine 1 for a configuration. The chip card 49, for example, contains a mail carrier identifier in order to generate a stamp image with the postage meter machine and to frank the postal matter in conformity with the desired mail carrier. (p.8, I.5-9)

The manufacturing process of the postage meter machine is divided into a number of steps, with one of the last steps being the country-specific and/or carrier-specific editing of the franking imprint and assignment of the machine serial number. (p.11, I.9-11) The "manufacturing process" means all fabrication and configuration steps that lead to a functional franking device. (p.11, I.12-13) The configuration of

the country-specific and/or carrier-specific data alternatively can ensue outside the manufacturing plant in a subsidiary or at a dealer authorized to do this by the manufacturer, remote from the use location. (p.11, l.13-15) The advantage of the inventive method is that all franking devices are physically produced in an identical way, and splitting is only necessary at the end of the manufacturing process. (p.11, l.16-18) The last steps needed for this purpose can be separated in time and space from the physical manufacturing steps. (p.11, l.18-19) It can be left to the foreign subsidiaries and commercial representatives as to how they shall organize this country-specific and/or carrier-specific configuration. (p.11, l.19-21) The respective logistics differ for different distribution areas. For example, the method is suitable for parts of the European market where the graphic design of the postage stamp, the script (for example, Roman) and, possibly, the currency unit (for example, Euro) are largely uniform. (p.11, l.21 P.12, l.1) The existing interface is used for a specific card 49 in order to enter data into the postage meter machine 1 to carry out the final configuration thereof, by storing at least an identifier for the appertaining country in the respective language and the carrier logo in defined fashion. (p.12, l.1-5) Even though the versatility of combinations is large, only the permitted (usable) combinations are, of course, of interest. (p.12, l.5-6)

Figure 3 shows a franking stamp imprint in a form it takes in Germany after the currency conversion to Euro. Printing begins from right to left with the value imprint 31, the postmark 32 and, if desired, an advertising slogan 33. The advertising slogan 33 can be freely determined or selected by the customer. The logo of Deutsche Post AG is a post horn in the upper right corner of a rectangular value imprint frame. The designation EURO CENT for the currency unit resides over

the window with the value 0000. An identifier (company and machine number) is printed therebelow. (p.12, l.7-13)

Country versions with uniform script and currency exist in Europe which differ from one another only according to the language and the selected carrier. When a cover agency of the national European postal services assumes responsibility in future for the mail carrying, the differentiation according to national mail carriers can also be eliminated. (p.12, l.14-18)

A bilingual format can be documented in the franking imprint with respect to the language such as, for example, in Belgium or South Africa. The graphic design of the postage stamp frame and of the postmark frame deviates from the appearance that is standard in most countries, for example in South Africa and Holland. (p.12, l.19-22)

Other parts of the European market must be more highly specified; for example, a specific country version already exists with the Greek alphabet and language as well as with a specific carrier logo, for which reason the Greek alphabet is also subsequently loaded with the chip card. (p.13, l.1-4)

In general, the script and the currency are country-specific. Thus, a specific country version with the Cyrillic alphabet, the currency of Rubles, but no specific carrier logo is used for Belorussia, since there is no carrier selection in some countries, i.e. logo, script and currency are rigidly prescribed. (p.13, l.5-8)

The USA represents an antithetical example, numerous private mail carriers (couriers) operate therein in addition to the governmental postal authorities USPS. (p.13, l.9-10)

It is assumed for the practical embodiment of the method that data taking the common characteristics in the distribution area into consideration are installed in the first step and data taking the differences in the distribution area into consideration are installed in the second step. (p.13, l.11-14) Two versions thereby proceed as follows.

Initially, in a first configuration step, carrier-specific and/or country-specific data that correspond to a uniform basic franking image are non-volatilely stored in the memory 94 of the postage meter machine 1. (p.13, l.15-17) The postage meter machine serial number is entered in a step separate therefrom. (p.13, l.17-18) The franking image format data for the selection are arranged in a data bank of the manufacturer organized at least according to mail carriers and/or countries and can be allocated to a serial number. (p.13, l.18-20) A postage meter machine 1 is considered pre-configured after a first step when defined data in the aforementioned data bank are allocated to a postage meter machine serial number. (p.13, l.20-22) As needed, this postage meter machine 1 can be finally configured in a second step. (p.13, l.23)

In the first version, the print image data are transferred from a chip card into the graphics memory of the postage meter machine 1 in order to enable at least the generation of the carrier-specific and/or country-specific logos (for example, postal symbols). (p.14, l.1-4) After the loading and storing of the data, the chip card 49 is removed from the chip card reader unit 70. (p.14, l.4-5) The configuration with the same chip card 49 can only be accomplished during the initial insertion. (p.14, l.5-6) An inhibit bit is automatically set in a memory cell of the non-volatile memory 94 after the removal of the chip card 49 in order to prevent an unauthorized, repeat

configuration. (p.14, l.6-8) Every further insertion of a different chip card in the future can modify such a configuration, with an appropriate authorization procedure being executed by the further chip card. (p.14, l.8-10) This is particularly advantageous given leased postage meter machines. When such a machine is returned to the dealer in the same distribution area at the end of its lease, a re-configuration can ensue at the dealer with a suitable chip card 49. (p.14, l.10-13) The print image data transferred from a chip card 49 into the graphics memory of the postage meter machine are, for example, related to a specific carrier and to a specific country. (p.14, l.13-15) Given some private mail carriers, the stored, carrier-specific data are country-independent, pure graphic data (logos), and the country-specific data (language) are pure word data or refer to the national currency. (p.14, l.15-17)

In one form of the first version communicated country-specific data are combined with the carrier-specific data stored in the preceding step, or vice versa. (p.14, l.18-19) When the distribution area is limited to one country (for example, India), all country-specific data are stored in the first step and the loading of the carrier-specific data ensues after the selection of the desired carrier. (p.14, l.19-22) In the distribution area of North America (i.e., USA and Canada), it is possible also to proceed oppositely in that the machines are first set to a carrier and are only set to the desired country as a final step. The term "country" as used herein means the territory under the authority of a single overriding governmental sovereign. The prior production of machines pre-configured to a carrier in advance is particularly meaningful for the postage meter machine manufacturer when the carrier has a relatively large market share. (p.14, l.22 – p. 15, l.5)

In a another form of the first version uses more than two configuration steps, preferably with a number of chip cards, are executed. (p.15, I.6-7) Each chip card carries an identifier regarding the combination that can be undertaken with it, for example for a distribution area within the European union. (p.15, I.7-9) The currency can then already be determined in the first configuration step. (p.15, I.9-10) In a second configuration step, the remaining specification data such as, for example, the logo of the national mail carrier, can then be loaded from a further chip card. (p.15, I.10-12) In a third configuration step, the city or the future receiving office can then be loaded. These three steps can be carried out at different locations. (p.15, I.12-14) Thus, the definition of the distribution area and of the country can be carried out by the manufacturer. (p.15, I.14-15) The postage meter machine pre-configured in this way is shipped to the national subsidiary of the defined country. (p.15, I.15-17) A stipulation of the receiving office desired by the dealer or wholesaler is implemented at the defined country with the third configuration step. (p.15, I.17-18) This graduated method has the advantage that final customer particulars need not be present for the pre-fabrication, or no customer order must be present, but the machines can be produced for warehousing, (inventory) thereby lowering the logistical manufacturing costs. (p.15, I.18-22) Another advantage is that all possible data sets need not be stored at one location. (p.15, I.22-23) Alternatively to the chip card, some other interface, for example V 24, can be used in order to transmit data sets that are stored in a workstation or in a PC. (p.15, I.23- p.16, I.2)

In the second version, the chip card 49 is inserted only in order to undertake a selection among the postal symbols that are stored in the postage meter machine and can be displayed via the display 89. (p.16, I.3-5) The franking imprint image

data have already been stored for selection in the non-volatile memory of the postage meter machine 1 in a preceding step, organized according to carrier and/or country. (p.16, l.5-7) The print image data have an identification number allocated thereto, for example CIN (carrier identification number), SIN (state identification number), etc., so that only the respective identification numbers need to be loaded with the chip card 49 into a particular memory area of the non-volatile memory 94 of the postage meter machine 1 in order to produce a defined allocation for generating the desired franking imprint format. (p.16, l.7-12) In one form, the non-selected, stored postal symbols are subsequently automatically erased by the postage meter machine controller or upon removal of the chip card 49 from the chip card reader unit 70. (p.16, l.12-15)

ISSUES:

The following issues are the subject of the present appeal:

Whether the subject matter of claims 1, 2, 7 and 9 is anticipated under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) by United States Patent No. 5,262,939 (Vanpoucke);

Whether the subject matter of claims 1-7 and 9 is anticipated under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) by United States Patent No. 5,490,077 (Freytag); and

Whether the subject matter of claims 1-7 and 9 is anticipated under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) by United States Patent No. 5,710,706 (Märkl et al.).

GROUPING OF CLAIMS:

The patentability of claims 1-7 and 9 stands or falls together.

ARGUMENT:

As explained in the introductory portion of the present specification, the franking imprint which is printed by a franking machine must include, according to

most Governmental postal regulations, country-specific data, and may also include carrier-specific information. Moreover, at least the country-specific information in the franking imprint must not be able to be altered by a user or a customer of the franking machine, otherwise the franking imprint would not conform to the relevant Governmental regulations in the country of use of the franking machine.

Conventionally, therefore, the configuration of the franking imprint (i.e. the entry of data into the franking imprint memory which is used by the digital printer to print the franking imprint) has either been permanently programmed into a memory in the franking machine at the location of manufacture, or the machine has been configured by a dealer in the country of use, after the franking machine has been shipped from the manufacturer to the dealer. Such configuration by a dealer either takes place at the dealer's main facility, or by a service technician at the time the franking machine is installed at a customer's location. If the franking machine is configured at the manufacturer's location, this means that the manufacturer must maintain an inventory of a large number of franking machines respectively configured for a large number of different countries (or at least the number of countries in which the manufacturer does business). Configuring the franking machine at the dealer's facility, or on-site at the customer's location, is time-consuming and labor intensive, and thus adds to overhead costs.

The present invention avoids this problem by storing, at the manufacturer's location at the time a franking machine is manufactured, different sets of data respectively for configuring the franking imprint in different countries, and different sets of data for respectively configuring the franking imprint for different carriers. Such data are stored in a non-removable, non-volatile memory in the franking

machine. Since every franking machine contains all of the necessary data for (potentially) being configured for any country and any carrier, every franking machine which is maintained in inventory is identical. When a franking machine is to be shipped to a particular country, it is configured for that country by selecting the appropriate country-specific data stored in the non-volatile memory and loading that data from the non-volatile memory into the franking memory. The franking memory is then inhibited so that it cannot be further configured after it leaves the manufacturer.

In a preferred embodiment, this selection takes place by inserting a chip card reader of the franking machine. The chip card, however, does not contain the actual country-specific data (this data, as noted above, having been permanently stored in the memory of the franking machine itself). Instead, the chip card contains only selection data which selects the appropriate country-specific data from among the already-stored different sets of country-specific data. The same procedure can be undertaken, if desired, for selecting carrier-specific data to configure the franking imprint.

By this method and apparatus, the manufacturer is relieved of having to maintain and track a large number of differently configured franking machines in inventory, and the dealer is relieved from having to configure each franking machine upon its arrival at the dealer or upon its installation at a customer. Moreover, since in the preferred embodiment, the chip card contains only selection data, there is no need to store an extensive amount of data on the card.

In all of the references cited by the Examiner, a chip card is inserted into a processor, such as a processor in a franking machine, to configure a memory

accessible by the processor, but in all instances of the references cited by the Examiner, data are actually loaded into the memory in question from the chip card via the processor. In other words, in all of the references cited by the Examiner, the chip card itself contains the data which are to be loaded into the processor memory. There is no suggestion or teaching in any of the references to previously store all of the necessary sets of data in the device containing the processor, and then to only select from among the previously-stored data by inserting the chip card, as disclosed and claimed in the present application.

Independent method claim 1 explicitly states that a selection is made from among different sets of previously stored data in order to configure the franking imprint, and independent apparatus claim 9 explicitly includes the same limitations, with the added requirement of the use of a chip card containing the aforementioned selection data. Chip card usage is set forth in the method claims in the dependent claims.

The Vanpouke reference discloses a system for processing parcel shipping which has file memories 2 in the portion of the Vanpouke reference entitled "Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiment" there is no description of the contents of the file memories 2, however, in the section entitled "Summary of the Invention," claim 1 of the Vanpouke patent is repeated, and it is stated therein that a memory or memories include "a destination country file containing characteristics specific to said countries and relating to their identification both with respect to tariff and with respect to the documents profile to services for said countries" (column 2, lines 52-57).

The system includes several printers 10, 11 and 12; and a postage meter 13.

There is no disclosure anywhere in the Vanpouke reference as to when or how data are entered into the file memory 2, however, even if it assumed that such data entry takes place at the location of the manufacturer, as set forth in claims 1 and 9 of the present application, there still is no teaching whatsoever in the Vanpouke reference that any of the data in the file memory 2 relates to configuring the franking imprint so as to be appropriate for a specific carrier or a specific country. The only component in the Vanpouke system which could print a franking imprint would be the postage meter 13, and there is no description at all in the Vanpouke reference for transmitting data from the file memory 2 to the postage meter 13 to configure the franking imprint dependent on a particular country or a carrier. The only reason why carrier information are described at all in the Vanpouke reference is to allow the printing of appropriate documents, which are never described specifically in the Vanpouke reference, but can assume to be documents such as bills of lading, shipping forms and the like. These documents, however, are not printed by the postage meter 13, but are printed by one of the printers, 10, 11 or 12, and thus have nothing to do with the contents of a franking imprint.

As noted above, the file memory 2 does contain tariff rates for different countries, and depending on the country to which a parcel is to be sent, the appropriate tariff rate table will be employed for calculating the shipping costs. There is no explicit statement in the Vanpouke reference that this represents a postage fee, but even if this is the case there is no disclosure in the Vanpouke reference to make any use of the country-specific tariff tables other than for calculating a numerical value. Even if this numerical value is then incorporated in whatever franking imprint might be printed by the postage meter 13, this has nothing to do with configuring the

franking imprint for a particular country. As explained above, configuring the franking imprint for a particular country means arranging all of the individual items in the franking imprint in a manner that conforms to the postal regulations for a particular country. Moreover, in the United States for example, this means including tracking information in encrypted form. There is no disclosure whatsoever in the Vanpouke reference which indicates that any data of that type are supplied to the postage meter 13. In the absence of any such teaching in the Vanpouke reference, it must be assumed that the postage meter 13 is configured to print a franking imprint in the conventional manner. Simply changing the printed numerical postage value in that franking imprint is not the same as configuring the franking imprint, since a postage meter does not even "know" where to print the numerical value within the franking imprint until the franking imprint itself is appropriately configured.

Therefore, the Vanpouke reference does not disclose all of the steps of independent method claim 1 nor all of the elements of independent apparatus claim 9 as arranged and operating in those claims, and therefore does not anticipate either of those claims nor any of the claims depending from claim 1.

The Freytag reference is an example of the conventional type of postage meter configuring from which the present invention is a departure. In the Freytag reference (as explained in column 11, lines 42-56; column 12, lines 48-57 and column 21, lines 5-18), a chip card is provided that contains, or can contain, configuration data for respective franking imprints for multiple countries. This chip card is inserted into a card reader of a postage meter machine, and an entry must be made into the postage meter machine to designate a particular country. The configuration data for the country designated by this entry are then downloaded from

the chip card into the non-volatile permanent memory of the postage meter machine. After this configuration has been accomplished, the chip card is removed.

Even if the chip card, while inserted in the card reader, can be considered as a "memory" to which the processor of the postage meter has access, this is not a non-removable memory as explicitly set forth in claims 1 and 9, and the postage meter in Freytag is not configured by selecting at least one of the permanently programmed carrier-specific data and country-specific data from the non-removable memory data, as also explicitly set forth in claims 1 and 9. The chip card in the Freytag reference is, at best, a temporary memory, and it is non-removable memory.

In fact, the Freytag reference operates completely opposite to the method and apparatus of the claims on appeal. In the Freytag reference, a chip card containing information relating to franking imprints for multiple countries is inserted into the postage meter machine, and an entry is made from the postage meter to the chip card in order to instruct the chip card to download data for permanent storage in the postage meter in order to configure the franking imprint, that will be printed by the postage meter, for the designated country. In the method and apparatus of the claims on appeal, by contrast, the country-specific and carrier-specific data are permanently programmed into a non-removable memory of the postage meter, and (in one embodiment) a chip card is then inserted into the postage meter to provide the designation as to which country-specific or carrier-specific data should be used to configure the franking imprint. In the Freytag reference, the relevant data are stored in the chip card and an instruction comes from the postage meter; in the subject matter of the claims on appeal (in one embodiment) the relevant data are

permanently stored in the postage meter, and the instruction comes from a chip card (or, generically from a data communication interface).

The Freytag reference therefore does not disclose all of the method steps of claim 1 nor all of the elements of claim 9, and does not anticipate either of those claims, nor any of the claims depending from claim 1.

The Märkl et al. reference is directed to a method and an arrangement for entering data into a postage meter, via a postage calculating scale. A postage calculating scale is a type of scale which, in addition to weighing a postal item, also calculates the appropriate postage for that item, and transmits this information to the postage meter so that the postage meter can print a franking imprint with the correct postage. This relieves the processor in the postage meter from having to store rate table data and from being burdened with making this calculation. The Märkl et al. reference also discloses entering data into the postage meter for changing an advertising slogan that can be printed by the postage meter next to the franking imprint on the postal item. Changing the advertising slogan, however, has nothing whatsoever to do with configuring the franking imprint. More importantly, however, there is no discussion at all in the Märkl et al. reference regarding permanent storage in the postage meter, in a non-removable memory, of carrier-specific or country-specific data for configuring the franking imprint, with one of these sets of data being subsequently selected for configuring the franking imprint, as set forth in the claims on appeal. The most that takes place in the system disclosed in the Märkl et al. reference is that a "handshake" routine is executed between the scale and the postage meter so that the scale is informed of the current date and time, so that the scale can make use of the appropriate postage rate table. As discussed above in

connection with this Vanpouke reference, merely calculating an appropriate numerical postage value and then printing that numerical value within the franking imprint is not the same as configuring the franking imprint to conform to the requirements of a specific carrier or a specific country.

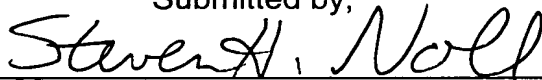
The Märkl et al. reference, therefore, does not disclose all of the method steps of claim 1 nor all of the elements of claim 9, and thus does not anticipate either of those claims under 35 U.S.C. §102(b), nor does the Märkl et al. reference anticipate any of the claims depending from claim 1.

CONCLUSION:

For the foregoing reasons, Appellant respectfully submits the Examiner is in error in law and in fact in rejecting claims 1-7 and 9 as being anticipated by the above-discussed references. Reversal of this rejection is therefore justified, and the same is respectfully requested.,

This Appeal Brief is accompanied by a check for the requisite fee in the amount of \$320.00.

Submitted by,



(Reg. 28,982)

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STEVEN H. NOLL

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APPENDIX "A"

1. (Amended) A method for entering contents of a franking imprint into a postage meter machine, said postage meter machine having an electronic, digitally operating printer and said contents being employed for printing said franking imprint with said printer, said method comprising the steps of:

storing a set of data in a non-volatile, non-removable memory of said postage meter machine by permanently programming said set of data at a manufacturing location, said data being selected from the group consisting of different country-specific data and different carrier-specific data;

installing a data communication interface in said postage meter machine; and configuring said franking imprint of said postage meter machine prior to use at a use location remote from said manufacturing location for at least one of a selected carrier and a selected country, by communicating with said postage meter machine via said interface, to select at least one of said permanently programmed carrier-specific data and country-specific from said non-removable memory data.

2. A method as claimed in claim 1 comprising installing a chip card reader as said interface, and configuring said postage meter machine using a chip card insertable into said chip card reader before delivery of said postage meter machine to said use location.

3. A method as claimed in claim 2 comprising storing said set of data in said non-removable memory of said postage meter machine in a non-erasable manner at said manufacturing location, and subsequently selecting among said of different

carrier-specific data by communicating via said interface with a country-specific chip card inserted into said chip card reader, and setting an inhibit bit in said non-volatile memory after removing said chip card to prevent any further configuration of said postage meter machine.

4. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 2 wherein said chip card makes both a carrier-specific selection among said different carrier specific data and a country-specific selection among said different country-specific data.

5. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said interface comprises a chip card reader and comprising configuring said postage meter machine at said manufacturing location for a selected country wherein said postage meter machine is to be used by inserting a country-specific chip card into said chip card reader and combining country-specific data on said chip card with said permanently stored carrier-specific data.

6. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said interface comprises a chip card reader and comprising configuring said postage meter machine at said manufacturing location for a selected country wherein said postage meter machine is to be used by inserting a carrier-specific chip card into said chip card reader and combining carrier-specific data on said chip card with said permanently stored country-specific data.

7. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said interface comprises a chip card reader, and including the additional step of transferring print image data for said franking imprint from a chip card inserted in said chip card reader into a graphic memory of said postage meter machine for generating at least a carrier specific franking imprint, and after removal of said chip card setting an inhibit bit in said

graphics memory to prevent any further configuration of said postage meter machine.

9. An arrangement for entering contents of a franking imprint into a postage meter machine comprising:

- a chip card reader adapted to receive a chip card therein containing selection data;

- a franking imprint memory into which data representing a franking imprint are loadable;

- a microprocessor connected to said chip card reader;

- a permanently installed non-volatile memory connected to said microprocessor, said non-volatile memory containing memory areas in which different carrier-specific data and different country specific data are stored; and

said microprocessor receiving said selection data from a chip card inserted in said chip card reader and loading at least one of carrier-specific data and country-specific data into said franking imprint memory from said non-volatile memory dependent on said selection data to configure said franking imprint and thereafter inhibiting said franking imprint memory to prevent any further configuration thereof.